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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 06 PRISTINA 000336

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TAGS: KDEM PGOV PREL UNMIK YI

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR WISNER URGES KOSOVARS TO BEAR DOWN ON  
FINAL STATUS, STANDARDS; IMPRESSED BY NEW TEAM

REF: PRISTINA 310

Classified By: Chief of Mission Philip Goldberg for reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d)

**¶1. (C) SUMMARY.** During an April 14-16 visit to Kosovo, U.S. Special Representative Frank Wisner congratulated the revamped Kosovo Albanian leadership team for its serious engagement in the Vienna final status process and for its outreach to the Kosovo Serb community. He urged the team to build on its record by making its best offer yet on decentralization at the next Vienna meeting and by preparing very generous opening positions on upcoming issues, including the protection of religious sites, returns, property rights, and the special case of Mitrovica. The Kosovo Albanian response was almost uniformly positive. Ambassador Wisner told moderate and hard-line Kosovo Serb leaders alike that their continued nonparticipation in Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self Government (PISG) only made much more difficult the task of finding a way out of what all agreed was an unsustainable status quo. Although neither Kosovo Serb group predicted a return to the PISG, the moderates at least were hopeful of progress in Vienna whereas the hard-liners seemed deluded that they would have veto rights over any final status determination. Ambassador Wisner's visit to two western Kosovo villages -- one Albanian and one Serb -- subjected to brutal violence during and after the war demonstrated the special obstacles to returns to that part of Kosovo. Finally, the ambassador's visit to Decani Monastery found the resident Serbian Orthodox monks anxious for international community commitment to hold the Kosovo Albanian public to any agreements on preservation of religious sites negotiated by their leaders. END SUMMARY.

**¶2. (SBU)** Ambassador Frank Wisner, the Secretary's Special Representative for Kosovo Final Status Talks, visited Kosovo on April 14-16. In Pristina, Ambassador Wisner met privately with new Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu and new Prime Minister Agim Ceku. He met collectively with the Kosovo Albanian negotiating team comprising Sejdiu, Ceku, Assembly President Kole Berisha, Presidential Advisor Skender Hyseni, opposition leaders Hashim Thaci and Veton Surroi, and team coordinator Blerim Shala. Former Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi joined the ambassador and several members of the team

at dinner. The ambassador also met in Pristina with SRSG Soren Jessen-Petersen and Kosovo Serb leaders Oliver Ivanovic, Goran Bogdanovic, and Randjel Nojkic. In Mitrovica, he met with hard-line Kosovo Serb leaders Marco Jaksic and Nebojsa Jovic. In Prizren, he met with Mayor Eqrem Kryeziu and non-Serb deputy mayors Ercan Spat (Turk) and Cemajlje Kurtishi (Bosniak). In the Kosovo Albanian village of Krushe e Vogel, the ambassador met with missing persons activist Agron Limani, two survivors of ethnic cleansing who had testified at the Slobodan Milosevic trial in The Hague, and several surviving widows. In the Kosovo Serb village of Belo Polje, he met with a dozen returnees. Finally, at the Decani Monastery, he met with Bishop Teodosije Sibalic Father Sava Janjic. Ambassador Wisner also received a briefing from KFOR Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Joseph Orr (US). COM participated in all meetings and visits.

EU: Getting to Final Status in 2006

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¶ 13. (C) Ambassador Wisner told Kosovo-based interlocutors that his visit to Europe and the Balkans had three objectives -- to satisfy the USG that our EU colleagues were fully engaged on steps to reach final status and beyond; to reach out to Kosovo's neighbors in Tirana, Athens, and Skopje regarding final status; and to review in Pristina and Belgrade the progression of the final status process to date. The ambassador told the assembled Kosovo final status negotiating team (a.k.a. the "Unity Team") that he was happy to report that he had found EU leaders in Brussels to be "disciplined and focused on the issues" and fully intending to help determine Kosovo's final status by the end of 2006.

PRISTINA 00000336 002 OF 006

¶ 14. (C) Going into a more detailed accounting with SRSG Jessen-Petersen, Wisner said EU leaders, particularly (EU) enlargement chief Olli Rehn, were clearly focused on wrapping up the process in 2006 and were developing a timetable of tasks needing completion this year to create "a Kosovar entity that can stand on its own feet, perhaps with supervision at the beginning. He said the EU envisions an international "superchief with specific authorities" to lead Kosovo through a transition phase upon determination of final status. Wisner said he would personally like to see this individual named early enough in 2006 events to "help write his or her own job description." Wisner said he had also found the EU very focused on the potential transformation of the Kosovo Protection Corps into a combination security/border police/civilian protection force.

¶ 15. (C) Ambassador Wisner often noted the challenge the EU faces in bringing 25 member states to consensus on Kosovo's final status and often suggested that to this end the strong approval of other capitals and the United Nations Security Council would be essential. He was happy to see that the EU is sending a police and justice fact-finding team to Kosovo and congratulated the SRSG on his role in bringing about that visit. Wisner offered his own office as a point of ongoing USG outreach and coordination.

New Team Off to Great Start But Final Status Gear Shift  
Needed to Bring on End Game

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¶ 16. (C) Ambassador Wisner reminded Kosovo Albanian leaders that he had asked them for two things when he last met with them in February -- their full engagement with the Ahtisaari/Vienna process and a maximum effort on the ground in Kosovo, particularly to reach out to the Kosovo Serb community. He congratulated them for substantial efforts on both counts, particularly praising the work of Veton Surroi and his consultative process that had produced the most serious Kosovar-organized gathering of Albanian and minority

leaders (in Durres, Albania) since the war. Accepting this praise, Surroi said he had been personally astonished to realize in Durres that none of the Kosovo Serbian leaders in attendance (all moderates) had even been briefed by Belgrade on developments at the Vienna talks, adding that the Kosovo Albanians leaders would be privileged to continue providing these briefings.

17. (C) Surroi also had high praise for the cooperative spirit exhibited by new Unity Team members Sejdiu, Berisha, and Ceku, a sentiment strongly shared by SRSG Jessen-Petersen. The SRSG said the new leaders "had brought about a change in the political landscape of Kosovo." Drawing unmistakable though tacit comparisons to the former president, Assembly president, and prime minister, the SRSG said: "Sejdiu engages and discusses. Berisha has created a new, cooperative, and transparent Assembly, even inviting UNMIK to conduct audits. Ceku is strongly motivated and organized; we covered eight or nine topics in our weekly meeting today in 55 minutes."

18. (C) While praising Unity Team members for their efforts over the last several weeks, Ambassador Wisner was also careful to praise them for not picking public quarrels with Belgrade, most recently over its decision to compel Kosovo Serb public servants to refuse salaries paid by Pristina. The ambassador and the SRSG agreed that this combination of outreach to Kosovo Serbs and restraint in reaction to Belgrade provocation would serve the Unity Team well in the face of what they saw as an obvious hardening of Belgrade's negotiating position. Jessen-Petersen believes "the primary reason for this hardening is that Belgrade sees which way this is going" (i.e., to independence for Kosovo), but the SRSG also believes the arrival of Ceku as prime minister has boxed Belgrade in to a degree in that Ceku "is getting out there" (i.e. reaching out to Kosovo Serbs) because his war

PRISTINA 00000336 003 OF 006

record as Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) commander leaves him fearless of accused of betraying the Kosovo Albanian cause. Ambassador Wisner assured Unity Team members that he would tell leaders in Belgrade that the USG has duly noted their very unhelpful salaries initiative and their generally uncooperative approach to the Vienna negotiations.

19. (C) Ambassador Wisner urged Kosovo Albanian leaders to continue to build on their recent positive record by developing generous and full negotiating positions on the component elements of the final status process. On decentralization, Wisner cautioned against a recent unfortunate tendency of Kosovo Albanian negotiators "to get hung up on legalisms." On property rights, law and order, freedom of movement, and returns, he urged them to consider that every step forward they make collectively supports their negotiating goals and provides him evidence of progress he could carry to Belgrade. He frankly told Unity Team members that they should "keep their eye on the main game, the final status solution, and that to my mind means independence."

110. (C) During a COM-hosted dinner with several Unity Team members joined by former Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi (now drafting a position paper on the ethnically divided city of Mitrovica for the team), Ambassador Wisner continued on this big picture theme. In urging greater generosity in the negotiations, he said most every Kosovo Albanian concern melts away when viewed in a broad context -- "if you don't get everything you want today, so what? You may prefer a united Mitrovica in a united Kosovo, but you may not get it; you may get it tomorrow. It will be hard to accomplish in the negotiations everything that wasn't done in the past seven years. Think carefully about how to secure final status. We need to be very smart, flexible, and maybe drive around some obstacles to deal with them later."

Ceku Gets It

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¶11. (C) Ambassador Wisner found that new Prime Minister Agim Ceku understands, instinctively it seems, what has to be done on the Kosovo ground to keep the final status process on track. When the ambassador urged Ceku privately to continue the very public outreach on minority issues that has characterized his first month in office, Ceku rolled out a five-point plan to do just that. The PM said his five priorities for the next two to three months would be: standards implementation; interethnic confidence building; law and order; economic development; and setting the stage for eventual EU integration. Specific measures slated for implementation include the creation of more police substations and post offices in minority areas, a public campaign of zero tolerance for interethnic violence, the appointment of Croatian Serb leader Milorad Pupovac as advisor for minority outreach, rolling financial audits of ministries and public officials, and development of a strategic plan for electrical energy development. Ambassador Wisner suggested that a public information campaign be launched to assist in the filing of agricultural and commercial property claims with the new Kosovo Property Agency, a step Ceku said would be taken.

Thaci: Letting Us Know He's Here

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¶12. (C) In a minor discordant note, opposition leader Hashim Thaci (president of the Democratic Party of Kosovo) resisted Ambassador Wisner's call for Unity Team endorsement of an unabridged right of return for all Kosovo citizens to any part of Kosovo. Thaci insisted that some parts of Kosovo, naming Mitrovica in particular, were not sufficiently secure to permit returns and that other parts of Kosovo lacked economic opportunity for returnees. The ambassador suggested that Thaci would do better to frame Kosovo policy as supporting an "unabridged right of return" and committing the team to do all that is necessary to supply security and economic opportunity for returnees.

PRISTINA 00000336 004 OF 006

Moderate and Hard-line Kosovo Serbs: Some, But Not Much, Room for Discussion

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¶13. (C) Ambassador Wisner urged representatives of the moderate Serbian List for Kosovo and Metohija (SLKM) to rejoin Kosovo government institutions. SLKM leader Oliver Ivanovic asked Wisner to ensure a peaceful status negotiations process after which individual Kosovo Serbs could reasonably decide whether to stay in Kosovo or leave. Wisner's praise for the new Kosovo government brought a strong reaction from Goran Bogdanovic, a member of Belgrade's negotiating team, who said that the current government had only issued "false promises" on standards implementation and done nothing to improve safety for Serbs in Kosovo, encourage returns or develop the economy in Serb-inhabited areas. Wisner agreed that there are problems, but added that he is convinced Ceku and Sejdiu are addressing them in good faith. Bogdanovic also conceded that the Vienna talks showed promise. Randjel Nojkic warned against the international community imposing a solution for Kosovo and complained that Belgrade does not want the SLKM to participate in Kosovo institutions because it does not want progress prior to final status. He also said that although no one will admit to favoring the partition of Kosovo, he believes it may be the practical solution that Belgrade is aiming towards.

¶14. (C) Hard-line Kosovo Serb leaders in northern Kosovo showed no interest in participation in Kosovo institutions or in cooperation or reconciliation with Kosovo Albanians. Ambassador Wisner lamented that northern Kosovo Serb leaders seem to "persist in habits of obstruction." He offered to act on Kosovo Serb economic and security interests in the

context of a final status solution, but said his ability to do so would be seriously limited by their continued refusal to engage. Marko Jaksic (EO-listed leader of the Association of Serb Municipalities and member of Belgrade's negotiating team) replied that Kosovo Serbs had participated in Kosovo institutions for three years and were rewarded with the violence of March 2004.

¶15. (C) Going to the status bottom line, Jaksic said Kosovo independence and Kosovo Serb survival are mutually exclusive. He said the United States must choose between Serbia and Kosovo -- if the U.S. chooses Kosovo's independence, it will never have Serbia as an ally and Serbia will turn away from EU integration. He added that if Albanians think they can get independence without Serbia's consent, they are "kidding themselves." Ambassador Wisner said that he had visited Serbs who were returning to Kosovo and who travel freely and that he has seen churches being rebuilt. He agreed that a multiethnic Kosovo had not been achieved but insisted that to deny progress was "ridiculous." The ambassador said Jaksic was ill-serving his community by presenting a false choice between Serbia and Kosovo and that such a choice would risk driving the U.S. away at the same time Jaksic and others are urging that U.S. to protect Kosovo Serbs.

¶16. (C) Nebojsa Jovic's nuanced version of Jaksic's points stressed that Serbs realize the status quo is not viable and want to participate in the resolution of the current situation. He urged that the USG work directly with the Serbian National Council to decide Kosovo's status, saying that "you've probably dealt with other Serbs who want to make you like them," (i.e. the SLKM) but that agreements entered into by such people could not be implemented in the field. He urged that final status not "punish" Serbs for the actions of Milosevic and look at a status solution between autonomy and independence. Ambassador Wisner expressed appreciation for Jovic's comments as "something to work with."

#### Western Kosovo Feelings Still Run High

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¶17. (C) During an April 15 visit to Krushe e Vogel/Mala

PRISTINA 00000336 005 OF 006

Krusa, villagers told Ambassador Wisner of a March 1999 massacre in which 112 men and boys were murdered by Serbian forces, allegedly including regular army troops, police, and local Serbs. Relatives of the massacre victims and survivors (two of whom testified in the Milosevic trial at International Tribunal on the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague) described the massacre and their frustration that no prosecutions had resulted, despite their identification of 56 former Serb neighbors (who are now living in Serbia) as perpetrators. Asked for their views on the return of displaced Serbs, Agron Limani, who heads the 26 March 1999 Association and whose father, brother, and two nephews were killed in the massacre, replied that "money should not be spent to bring these criminals back here." He said that the local population bitterly resented international community care for Kosovo Serbs and failure to prosecute those who have committed crimes.

¶18. (C) Serb returnees in Belo Polje, a village near Pec/Peje where 65 displaced Serb families have returned since 2003, said they had come back to Kosovo because their homes were dear to them and because they lacked the money to buy property elsewhere. Although appreciative of the international assistance which rebuilt their homes, they faced a near-total lack of employment (only one resident, a Kosovo Police Service officer, is employed), fear of venturing into town or working outlying fields, and alleged attempts by local ethnic Albanians to fraudulently appropriate their land. Freedom of movement concerns were intensified by the unrest of March 2004, during which ethnic Albanian rioters from Peja/Pec burned down virtually the entire village and forced the resident Serbs to flee to the

near-by Italian KFOR base. In conversation with Ambassador Wisner the returnees showed much more interest in the concrete conditions of their lives than in Kosovo's future status. They were very open to increased contact with their Kosovo Albanian neighbors.

Church Protection: International Presence Pending Ethnic Reconciliation

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¶19. (C) Ambassador Wisner visited the Decani Monastery where he asked Bishop Teodosije and Father Sava for the continued active involvement of Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) leaders in efforts to design protections for SOC properties. Church protection, the ambassador noted, would necessarily involve the cooperation of the international community and a strong security presence, adding however that an international presence could not substitute for ethnic reconciliation and cooperation, especially with respect to more ordinary churches for which protection zones like that recently created around Decani would be less feasible. Ambassador Wisner also suggested that the monastery invite President Sejdiu to its Easter services, and the Bishop agreed. (NOTE: Sejdiu accepted a subsequent invitation to the 23 April services. END NOTE.)

¶20. (C) Bishop Teodosije described his own active participation in the working group on protection of religious and cultural heritage and spoke with approval of the previous day's visit of Ora party leaders Veton Surroi and Ylber Hysa, who are preparing the Unity Team's position paper on protection of religious sites and cultural heritage. The bishop also outlined an SOC initiative to host an interreligious conference at the Pec Patriarchate in May and his own initiative to invite mayors and heads of prominent local ethnic Albanian families for discussions at the monastery. Sava and he frequently expressed concern, however, that Kosovo Albanian leaders would be willing to deliver strong SOC-protection messages to their constituents and, if such messages were delivered, to follow them up with enforcement of agreements made in the context of a final status determination. Sava said that the church appreciates the efforts of the international community, especially those of USOP, to use their influence with local Kosovo Albanian

PRISTINA 00000336 006 OF 006

leaders to protect Decani Monastery, but feared that a system that relies on "calling a few phone numbers" rather than institutionally respected legal measures is inherently fragile.

¶21. (SBU) Ambassador Wisner cleared on this message. USOP clears this cable for release in its entirety to UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari.

GOLDBERG